

March 19, 2019

Re: Opposition to HB 7192

To the Members of the Education Committee and Any Others Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of public school students in Darien, CT, I strongly oppose all sections pertaining to regionalization in HB 7192, including 7 through 10, and in SB 874, including 1 through 4, and any other bill that proposes: i) the creation of a Commission for the purpose of studying the redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools, iii) implementing forced regionalization or consolidation of public schools, or iv) penalizing public schools for NOT regionalizing. The reasons for my position are set forth below.

o My husband and I moved to our town for the schools, and the quality of our school district is what keeps us here. The locally run public schools provide a nurturing environment where engagement is high, student learning is individualized, and achievement is encouraged.

o I have not seen any evidence indicating that regionalizing school districts will save money given the costs of combining resources and added transportation costs. More importantly, I have not seen any evidence establishing that regionalization will maintain or improve the quality of education in school districts. According to a report by Hanover Research in 2014 entitled Best Practices for School Improvement Planning, a needs assessment of a failing school district is the first step that must be taken.

o A study conducted on K-12 Regionalization in CT of behalf of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving by Rodriguez Data Solutions LLC in May 2018 concludes that:

- regionalization or consolidation does not necessarily result in lower costs in the short or long term, and it can increase costs and negatively affect academic outcomes
- Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford school districts had higher than average per pupil expenditures notwithstanding enrollment greater than 15,000 in 2015-16
- CT districts with 2500-3000 students had the best educational outcomes with per pupil expenditures that were at average or below average levels in 2015-16
- parental involvement results in better academic outcomes and parents are more engaged when schools are small

o I am worried that regionalization or the lack of, or reduction in, local control will result in: i) larger enrollment in schools, ii) inadequate administrative support/supervision, iii) longer transportation times for children resulting in decreased engagement, lower academic scores, and increased absenteeism, iv) a decline in the quality of the education and academic outcomes, and v) reduced teacher and community engagement.

o Further, I am concerned that regionalization's erosion of the quality of the education in our local schools will effect the CT economy. If new families stop moving to CT towns because the quality of the education in the public schools has deteriorated, new businesses will not be attracted to our towns either. Moreover, existing families and businesses will leave at a greater rate than they are leaving now. This will worsen the state's fiscal crisis.

Please oppose the provisions in HB 7192 and SB 874 that pertain to regionalization, and any other legislation or legislative provisions that proposes: i) creating a Commission for the purpose of studying the redistricting or consolidating of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools, iii) implementing forced regionalization or consolidation of public schools, or iv) penalizing public schools for NOT regionalizing.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Emily Brown
Darien, CT